

10; d'Orleans--279-280

T-3

(1891-92) 1894

Laos

116, 517, 584 832

Ethnic subgroups

"Here we shall have a first glimpse of the customs of Laos; this strange country where love is held in such great respect, that it might be called the kingdom of the flirt. We walk up to the town, and find in the centre a square platform raised upon four posts; from [280] a fireplace formed of stones held in position by woven mats a few logs are throwing a feeble light over the scene. A young girl is seated, a scarf of orange silk knotted upon one shoulder, cleaning cotton by separating it from the seed by hand. Near her stands one of our boatmen, in a small white cloth jacket ornamented with European copper buttons, he is paying compliments to her. Holding one of her hands, he takes out the flowers she has placed in her hair, and passes them through the lobe of his ear. Further on, upon the terrace of a house, another young girl is talking to her lover; a small lamp gives them light, and they are playing at dinner or preparing betel for each other. They will, perhaps, chat together every night, in this way, for several months, simply exchanging ideas before coming to a definite understanding --a marriage generally follows."

[LSS: in Paklay] "In the evening the Siamese lieutenant invites us to a particularly original fête. Upon a small terrace in front of our verandah sit a dozen young girls, their [371] busts draped in gold-thread scarves of native make. Opposite them a dozen young men take their places. A man carrying a Laotian organ, which he has difficulty in setting up, follows them. The pipes of the organ are so long--nearly 14 feet--that he is finally obliged to cut a hole in the roof, but the damage can be easily repaired.

We are about to assist at a good game of repartee, between the men and the women, a sort of literary joust.

Each camp has its champion. On one side a young man, with a rather expressive face, contorts his facial muscles so as to produce every sort of mimicry. Opposite is an old woman with a wrinkled and pockmarked skin, though her ugliness does not prevent her, from possessing the gift of quick retort. The organ plays continually on a grave key in a sort of bass, while the persons present accompany it by clapping their hands at certain measures.

When the woman rejects her questioner's propositions, the latter takes two small candles, made of a little wax coiled round a few threads, holds them fixed with the thumb nail, and gesticulates, turning his hands and moving his arms in passes like those of a hypnotiser. To these movements correspond certain shruggings of the shoulders, contractions of the mouth, distortions of the nose and wriggings in consonance with the

measure of the organ music. When the grimaces are funny the women mark their satisfaction by bursting into peals of laughter.

Of the group of young men some interrupt to support or excite their champion, or they repeat a refrain in chorus. It is generally some popular phrase, [372] the meaning of which is not clear to either the Siamese lieutenant or the interpreter. There is also a series of exclamations, which one repeats twice, these cries corresponding to our shouts of encouragement: 'Keep it up, ' 'don't flinch, ' 'steady, ' and the like: Aou' aou' aoua! ioua! pemma! sempa! satna!

Sometimes the singing is in crescendo time and the singer seems to be in a hurry. The company becomes excited, encouraging and urging him on. A brass bowl is continually passed round, flowing over with tchoum-tchoum. The animation becomes greater and greater and the party breaks up amid a general hubbub. [LSS: for the text of some of the dialogue, see Laotians, category 539, p. 372-373.] "

[LSS: For a description of the game of repartee during which this dialogue was spoken, see Laotians, category 533, pp. 370-371] "Here are some scraps of the chanted dialogue which I took down from the lips of the interpreter.

HE. — 'I am very well off. I even have some elephants.'

SHE. — 'I am not free.'

HE. — 'If you marry me, you will have nothing to do and you will be free to act as you wish.'

SHE. — 'I am married. I have a child.'

HE. — 'That doesn't matter. I'll arrange with your husband so that he will let you go.'

The chorus replies in a refrain too free to be reproduced here.

SHE. — 'You are married.'

HE. — 'Ask the inhabitants of the village; I am not married.'

SHE. — 'I have known for a long time that you are poor. You haven't even a rupee.'

HE. — 'I haven't a rupee, but we will go into business and we shall have a good deal of money.' [373]

SHE. — 'Don't you hope to marry me?'

THE CHORUS. — 'It is sad to marry an old woman.'

HE. — 'I cannot marry you now, but later on when your husband is dead. You have a very pretty face, pretty as the god in the centre of the pagoda, who is so beautiful that

I dare not look at him. '

And he pretends to run away in terror. The young girls burst into laughter.

SHE. --'At a small rivulet there is not very much to drink. '

HE. --'Here are two candles. My face is well lighted. Does it please you or not?

You must say. '

SHE. --'I love you, and you don't love me. Whom am I to marry?'

HE. --'When we die, we will die together; we shall be burned together. '

SHE. --'When the flames mount up you will leave the young married woman. '

He goes up to the group of girls, and lights them with the candles, then returns to make love to the old woman.

HE. -- 'If you become my wife I will not abandon you. I could not find any one so pretty as you. '

SHE. --'We are going to bid you good-bye. If you love me we shall meet again in a few days. '

HE. --'When I go away from here I shall find no girl so pretty as you. I shall die. '
Upon this the party breaks up. "

A DRAGON APPARENT

403 electricians hugged each other, and, enchanted by the din, the
527 audience began to drift away from the theatre and make for the
dancing floor.

527 The second attraction in order of popularity was a love-court. A
● 584 quadrangular arrangement of tables had been formed, covered by a
782 thatched roof raised on posts decorated with woven bamboo
793 representations of animals, weapons and phallic emblems. Seated
round the tables in the interior of the square were the girls, and
their suitors sat facing them. Between the couples had been placed
offerings of food, brought by the girls. Originally a tribute to some
ancient, forgotten fertility god, a primeval Thai Venus, the offer-
ings would be given, next day, to the bonzes. All through the night
the bantering of witticisms, the singing and the exchange of
improvised verse would go on, accompanied by the accordion-like
[534] wheezings of the Kène, the Stone Age gourd pipes of Laos. Some-
times through a happy fault in the circuit the splutter and bellow of
the loud-speakers would suddenly lapse, and you heard the bee-
hive dronings of the communal love-making, the kènes, and the
voice of the presiding bonze, preaching continually in an archaic,
incomprehensible language from the wicker cage into which he
had been fastened. The cage symbolized the protection of his
religion from these earthly distractions. As soon as inspiration
failed he would be relieved by the next on the rota of preachers,
waiting now to take his place.

584 Love-courts are the accepted preliminary to the consummation of
[533] affairs of the heart, which — despite European conviction that
576 romantic love is a Western invention — are accompanied in Laos
by much versifying and mild, self-imposed frustrations. When, for
instance, a well-known beauty is wooed by a number of suitors, a
serenading match may be arranged on the veranda of her house to
permit her to test under competitive conditions the poetic and
[836] musical capabilities of each of them. Complete pre-marital freedom
is recognized, but much outward reserve is maintained. There is a
time and place for everything. It is incorrect, for example, to

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acknowledge in the street a lady with whom one happens to be on 584 particularly good terms. These things in Laos are fraught with an 576 etiquette which is the legacy of a highly organized society not too far gone in decay.

The charm of Vientiane lies in the life and the customs of the 346 people. Unless one is an amateur of pagoda architecture there is 531 little else to be seen. The Laotians have preferred to work in wood, rather than stone, and their art, confined chiefly to the decoration by religious artists of the doors, pillars and interiors of pagodas, quickly perishes in such a climate.

Outside the town there is a great, grey, half-decayed *stupa*, built 771 as a tomb for a hair of the Buddha. It is surrounded by a cloister, 755 containing perhaps a thousand Buddha images; a collection of 778 which the people of Vientiane are very proud. But even here, where the religion is practised in its purest form, there is a little degeneration, a little backsliding from the lofty philosophic conception; and the taint of magic practices shows itself. Selecting one of the numerous images as a personal tutelary divinity, the devotee subjects it to a kind of bribery similar to that sometimes practised in Southern Europe with images of the saints. In this case the image's chief function is healing, and when the sufferer recovers from any complaint he hastens to the pagoda to apply gold-leaf to the part of the Buddha corresponding to that where he has felt the pain in his own body. I was interested to deduce from this practice that the people of Vientiane are much plagued by headaches—perhaps 164 those which accompany malaria.

Standing in a corner of the sanctuary was an ancient ithyphallic 778 statue, an old Hindu divinity, no doubt, which had been worn 789 smooth in the appropriate parts by the feminine adoration of a 892 thousand years. I was told that the women of the French colony who wish for a child frequently emulate their husbands' pose of Laos-ization by coming here secretly to pay their respects. 1000 wondered whether this clandestine tribute might not be extended

643* through the mouth of his chancellor and never speaks to them ex-
576 cept through a go-between. . ."

643* A "Trojan War" in Tran-Ninh (1651-1652). Under the firm hand
648* of such a monarch, the vassals and tributary princes eagerly com-
175 plied with the slightest of their sovereign's orders. Great was the
584 astonishment, therefore, when it was learned in 1651 that Chao-
Kham-Xan, king of Xieng-Khouang, whom Souliga had asked for
the hand of his daughter Nang-Ken-Chan in marriage, had dared to
reply that the princess was not free and that he declined the honor of
this alliance. Enflamed by the accounts which had been given him
of the beauty and wisdom of the "pearl" of Tran-Ninh, the king of
Lan-Xang pretended not to notice the affront but gallantly persisted
and sent a messenger to take rich gifts to the girl. In vain. Then
Souliga sent for the princess manu militari. The detachment was
brought to an abrupt halt by the troops of King Chao-Kham-Xan and
had to retrace its steps, while the people of Xieng-Khouang foresaw
the worst and hastily built a fortress at Pana to protect their capi-
tal (1).

1. Cf. Captain de Pelacot, *op. cit.* /"Le Tran-Ninh
historique." *Revue indochinoise*. Hanoi, 1896./

643* Souliga decided that a small army of two thousand men would
648* be enough to punish Chao-Kham-Xan for his insolence. This force
721 did in fact take the stronghold of Pana by surprise and penetrate into
175* Xieng-Khouang on a bridge /118/ thrown over the ramparts. The
king, a prisoner in his own palace, had to give in. But although he
surrendered to force he kept a stubborn rancor over this misadventure
which was inherited by his son Chao-Kham-Lan who succeeded him
in 1688. This prince raised a thousand difficulties in paying the
traditional tribute to Lan-Xang, and friendly relations between the
two sister states were ended for good and all. In the eighteenth cen-
tury Xieng-Khouang was to be engaged in a permanent struggle with
Souliga's successors, and in the nineteenth century Chao-Noi, a
king of Tran-Ninh, was to deliver up the unfortunate king Anou, the
last monarch of Vientiane, to Siam.

643* But let us not anticipate further on these events but rather re-
175* turn to the year 1652, when Lan-Xang was shining with all its
splendor and when the minor expedition in Xieng-Khouang meant
no more to its king than a simple demonstration of his power and his
authority.

wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists" (4).

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien.

Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring of eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was displeasing to his "Phis," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

584 their mutual sentiments and decide in complete freedom on the principle of their future union.

Natural inclinations are rarely opposed by parents, and so it is primarily out of form and a sentiment of respect that a young man, after reaching an agreement with his fiancée, sends an old man to convey his proposal to the parents of the future bride.

[554] On the other hand, since Laotian customs establish the size of the dowry which young men must, depending on their social status, [192] deliver to their in-laws, girls eligible for marriage encourage only those suitors who are in a position to provide such a dowry (1).

(1) The sum varies, for the lower and middle classes, between ten and 250 francs. But in the families of notables it may go as high, counting jewelry and gifts, as 1200 or 1500 francs.

When an agreement has been reached the fiancée's parents give a feast to which relatives, friends, neighbors and bonzes are invited. The latter then set a day and hour for celebrating the marriage, taking care to choose a propitious day.

585 On the appointed day the groom, accompanied by his friends and by musicians, goes to the house of his future wife's parents, to whom he delivers the sum agreed on as his dowry as well as the clothes, jewels and various gifts which he may care to add. As a sign of homage he also gives his in-laws wax candles and flowers, which are often accompanied by various foods, brandy, tobacco, etc.

The marriage contract is immediately drawn up in the presence of a mandarin and notables of the region. The act gives the names of the bride and groom, as well as those of their parents and the witnesses and magistrates present. The sum of the dowry, the jewels and other objects delivered by the groom to his future bride and her parents are carefully listed. Then after the document is signed by the young couple the authorities affix their seal to it and it is given to the girl's parents (2).

[212] (2) When the bride or groom does not know how to write, his or her signature is replaced by a black or red thumbprint or by an outline of the joints of the index finger (generally of the left hand).

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colors are bright and harmonious. It is during these days of rejoicing that the first amorous intrigues often spring up between young people which, generally speaking, end in marriage.

Preparations for the funeral celebration went on, and dusk had not yet fallen when music and singing began to be heard and plates of food were passed around, as well as jars full of rice brandy.

Immediately after the death, men went to the forest to select the dead, but not decaying, tree whose trunk was to serve for making the coffin. Others prepared the pedestal on which it was to be placed and the roof which would surmount it.

The coffin was finally finished. Trapezoidal in shape, with the base uppermost, it rested on a wooden pedestal decorated with carvings. The roof placed above it was copied from the roofs of pagodas. The frame was made of bamboo lattice covered with glued calico, and the whole was ornamented with gold paper cutouts, streamers and multicolored cotton floss.

[205] The body was sealed in its coffin, where it rested on a bed of aromatic branches and leaves. It was fully dressed and surrounded by bedclothes. A sliding cover was dovetailed into place, and all joints sealed with an indestructible caulking compound made from lime, clay, albumen and paddy husks. [Illustration alongside text here]

The catafalque stood in the middle of the room, one of the walls of which had been removed, as we have seen. It was surrounded by flowers, green branches, lighted candles and stick incense perfumed with powdered benzoin.

In the course of the next four days the province bonzes and officials arrived, and all recited the ritual prayers in Pali around the catafalque without understanding anything of what they said but scrupulously observing the consecrated rhythm and intonation.

In the meantime a funeral pyre had been built on the sandy bank of the Mékong, left bare by the low waters, using about three [206] steres of dry wood which had been impregnated with resin, wood oil and kerosene.

Solidly held in place at the side by six heavy stakes of green wood, the pyre was surmounted by a high canopy or rectangular pavilion, the roof of which rose in tiers and was covered with flowered cotton cloth and decorated with gold paper garlands, cutouts and many-colored streamers.

This pavilion, supported by four posts decorated in the same taste, would presently serve to shelter the coffin.

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Since there is not, so to speak, any class of salaried workers in Laos except in certain types of work and in transport by pirogues and rafts, the inhabitants of any given center lend one another their help in farming, harvesting, building houses or pirogues, etc. Taking turns, the one who has asked help of his neighbors will put on a celebration for them when the work is over, and will himself receive an invitation from someone else in return for help which he has given.

Laotian celebrations, in which the bonzes are never forgotten, are usually given under the verandas of the pagodas or in their dependencies, unless they take place in the host's own home or under sheds specially constructed for the purpose on one side. The latter is always the case in a "Ngan" given for those who have helped in building a house, and the same is true for a birth or marriage.

Celebrations generally begin towards four or five in the afternoon when the heat is beginning to wane. They last all night and sometimes resume on the following day after the guests have relaxed for a few hours. Some "Ngans" go on in this way for nearly a week and are interrupted only by the coming of the Laotian sabbath, a day of absolute rest when only the preparation of food is permitted, and no work or pleasure. By the light of kerosene lamps borrowed here and there, or of resinous torches, the girls, who are decked out in all their finery, are stationed in a line squatting down against a wall or partition. Before them there are [221] vases made of copper, silver or porcelain. They all pretend to be busy with minor tasks and may imitate, for example, the preparation of food. But in reality this is only their way of keeping some kind of countenance.

The adults and children of both sexes are massed at each end of the row of girls. Then the young men, their heads covered with scarves, come and squat down opposite the girls and with their heads still covered begin an animated conversation which soon turns into regular flirting. If there is enough space the orchestra takes up its position nearby and in the center, between the young people, are the singers, improvisers and "Kene" players. Cakes, fruit, quids of betel, cigarettes, rice brandy and various condiments are passed around.

Spectators who have not been specially invited come and stand behind the young people, as do passersby who drop in for a quid, a cigarette, a cup of brandy or a bowl of rice, or to listen to the songs and music for a little while.

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From time to time a girl will get up and leave the celebration. She is soon followed by a young man, and both disappear into the shadows, escorted for form's sake by a little boy or girl. This is the beginning of a liaison and will doubtless end in marriage, unless the young gallant is in too much of a hurry, clumsy or flighty and finds himself faced with paying one of the special fines if he compromises the girl and refuses to make up for it.

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Offerings to the pagodas. There are other "Ngans" which have a half profane and half religious purpose. That is to say, they are established either to thank heaven for a lucky event or to solicit its clemency. They may occur, for example, either to celebrate a return to health after a long illness, or the success of a trading season or hunting or fishing expedition, or to call down blessings from on high on a trip which is being made or planned, etc. These types of "Ngans" then involve offerings to the pagodas and to the bonzes, offerings which bear the name of "Tone-Pheung" (literally, wax cut in pieces). They are so named because of the wax imitation flowers which decorate [222] a kind of pyramid or small pagoda supporting them, called "Pha-Sate" (in French, Faithful to God).

These little edifices are built and decorated by the friends or guests with a rapidity, a taste and an elegance which would be astounding if we did not know the degree to which artistic feeling is innate in the Laotian, and if we were not aware of the prodigious skill with which he is endowed.

Built on a bamboo framework covered with pieces of banana wood, carved with festoons and ornamental moldings, and arranged in tiers of roofs, in minarets and in columns, these "Pha-Sate," which are always between one and two meters in height, seem to be made of ivory and affect an extraordinary variety of forms each of which is more graceful than the last and which seem to be inspired by the architecture of the pagodas of India, Cambodia and Burma.

It will not be in vain to note that the only purpose of these ephemeral edicules, which will keep their new look for only a short while, is merely to present the wax offering in a less banal and more artistic manner than if it had been given in the form of thick, heavy, massive blocks.

The "Pha-Sate" are mounted on stretchers which are carried by men. Besides their wax flowers, they are decorated with natural

Building materials, interior arrangement and furniture in Thai houses do not differ in any significant way from what we have described in connection with the Laotians.

Births. Like the Laotian women, Thai women generally give birth to children with the greatest ease, and the ceremonies accompanying births are identical. 844

Marriages. Betrothals generally take place among the Thais after the farming work is over, in December or January, during the cold season. Sheds are built in the villages. Fires are laid there and the marriageable girls install themselves there with a spinning wheel, reel or cotton gin to keep them busy and prevent them from losing countenance. The young men come and join them and exchange declarations, compliments, betel quids and cigarettes with them. There it is that promises of marriage are made, which are followed by a request to the girl's parents when she gives her lover permission to do so. 584

A few days later, during a banquet which takes place in the girl's house, the engagement is announced and the young [236] people are then free to see one another and come and go together at all hours and in all places.

The marriage is not celebrated until several months after the betrothal unless traces of pregnancy are evident in the engaged girl, in which case the marriage takes place at once.

The ceremony is much simpler than among the Laotians, but it is followed by a series of banquets which succeed one another for several days and at which great quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. 585

The groom comes to live in his wife's room on his wedding day. He is supposed to stay in the home of his in-laws for eight years (only three years in some regions) and share in their work. 591

Adultery. Divorce. Cases of adultery are extremely rare. When such an eventuality does occur, the man is condemned to a fine of seven bars of silver (about 260 francs) and the woman to a fine of six bars of the same metal (about 225 francs). Half of these sums is awarded to the judges and the other half to the husband, who may then either take back or repudiate his unfaithful wife. 586
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"In the latter case, the unfaithful wife generally marries her accomplice.

"Divorce is rarer, but just as easy among the Thais as among 586

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291 Men's clothing consists of a jacket and pair of trousers which have the same shape as those of the Lus and are made of coarse cotton cloth manufactured locally. Their headgear is a turban cut from a piece of Turkey-red cotton.

For work, clothing is generally reduced to a narrow strip of cloth forming a belt, one of the ends of which is passed between the legs and fastened in the middle of the back.

During the cold season a jacket is added to this loin-cloth.

The women wear a skirt of the Laotian type which is fastened under the armpits so that it does not come down below the calves of the legs. A short jacket completes their costume. On their head they wear a turban which is generally dark in color. [Illustration alongside text here]

301 Jewelry. Both sexes have silver or copper jewelry such as wide stiff neckbands, bracelets, rings, buttons, clasps, etc. Like the Lus and the Youns, the Khas pierce the lobes of their ears. Often the holes are of such dimensions that a roll of leaves or a bouquet of flowers can be inserted in them.

362 Food. Their diet is very like that of the Laotians and Thais. When there is a shortage of rice its place is taken, until the following harvest, by yams, taros, bamboo sprouts, bapana flowers, etc.

462 Occupations. Women and children are given the hardest tasks imaginable, and it is unusual to meet them without baskets on their backs. The men carry only their bag, their sword, their rifle and their pipe.

595 Marriage. Divorce. Adultery. Polygamy is widespread among the Khas, and the number of wives a man possesses is the sign of his wealth. For, regarded as they are rather like beasts of burden and working constantly, the more numerous these wives are the more they will produce.

584 [254] The rules for marriage preliminaries closely resemble the Laotian customs and the ceremony itself, although much less splendid, comprises the same rites. To be sure, the role of the bonzes is filled here by "Pho-Tao," that is to say elders or sorcerers.

586 Divorce may be requested by the wife, or one of the wives, for personal reasons. It may also take place by mutual consent. Finally, 684 it is compulsory in the case of adultery, since the guilty woman must marry her accomplice.

Contrary to what is the case elsewhere, adultery on the part of the husband is punished by a double fine awarded to his wife's family

173: Deydier--36 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

Marriage

In Laos one gets married in the even months. The favorite month is the sixth, that of the feast of rockets, and the last one possible, because in the eighth month the sons-in-law do not dare to interrupt the work in the fields and after that until the twelfth month the Buddhist Lent must be observed. 585
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[56] The Marriage Proposal. Laotian tradition requires a previous request, and the obligatory giving of the Kha Khun Phi, tribute paid to the guardian genii, also the optional gift of the Kha Dong, the dowery which is given by the husband to the bride or to her parents. [782]
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The boy's mother, accompanied by one or two aged female relatives, goes to the home of the young girl, and in the course of conversing asks if the girl is of age to be married. The mother is free to answer that her daughter is too young or that no young man loves her, and that she runs the risk of remaining an old maid. In this last event the answer is an acceptance. Then during further visits material questions are settled. Up until the day of marriage the two affianced ones do not exchange a single word, and besides it is not necessary for them to know each other. However, as the Laotian villages are not very big, it is probable that the young people have had the opportunity to meet several times at the boun.

The official request takes place the day before the wedding and on the evening of this day, after dinner, the young man goes to the home of his future bride and with her attendants the prayer of the bonzes who bless the water contained in begging bowls. A white cotton cord links together the bonzes, the begging bowls and the two betrothed. The blessed water is kept throughout the night. The next day at the earliest hour the same bonzes, the relatives and friends come and sprinkle the two young people generously with this water. When they have dried themselves and changed their clothes, they make their morning offering to the bonzes who bless them once more. 788
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The Sou Khouan. This is properly called the marriage ceremony. The days and hours for the ceremony are determined by the aged hora (astrologists or soothsayers) after a minute study of the horoscopes of each one. This ceremony takes place in the home of the young girl. After a [57] family Sou Khouan celebrated at his home, the husband returns to his betrothed accompanied by two comrades who protect him with two parasols and followed by a procession of bearers. 585
[787]